

Description of the male of *Steatoda ephippiata* (Araneae: Theridiidae)

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Abstract: The previously unknown male of *Steatoda ephippiata* (Thorell, 1875) is described from recently collected material in Tunisia. Some new distribution records for the species are added and all known records are mapped.

Key words: Israel, North Africa, taxonomy, Tunisia

The members of the genus *Steatoda* are medium-sized to large spiders, represented in West and Central Europe by five well-known species (PLATNICK 2010). In the Mediterranean region, several less known species occur, some of which both sexes are known, some with only one sex known and even some undescribed species are to be expected. LEVY & AMITAI (1982) revised the *Steatoda* species of the Eastern Mediterranean region, including the *Steatoda ephippiata* (Thorell, 1875) of which at that time, only the female was known. The females were described from three occasions, originally from Egypt as *Lithyphantes ephippiatus* by THORELL (1875), then as *Lithyphantes ochraceus* by SIMON (1908), from Libya and later as *Teutana argentea* by CAPORIACCO (1933) also from Libya (LEVY & AMITAI 1982). The male was unknown until now and is described here for the first time.

CJVK: collection J. Van Keer, CRB: collection R. Bosmans. All measurements are in mm.

Taxonomy of *Steatoda ephippiata* (Thorell, 1875)

Lithyphantes ephippiatus Thorell, 1875: 63 (descr. female from Egypt).

Lithyphantes ochraceus Simon, 1908: 428 (descr. female from Libya).

Teutana argentea Caporiacco, 1933: 322, fig. 5 (descr. female from Libya); DENIS 1966: 121, fig. 31 (descr. female).

Steatoda ephippiata (Thorell, 1875): LEVY & AMITAI 1982: 22, figs 42–44 (descr. female; synonymy of *Lithyphantes ochraceus* and *Teutana argentea*); LEVY 1998: 71, figs 131–133 (descr. female).

Diagnosis

Males are separated from all other *Steatoda* species by the large straight bifid theridiid tegular apophysis and the short straight embolus (figs 2–3). Females are distinguished by a transverse structure of the epigyne with lateral arched rims and an upward protruding median bulge. Males and females can also be separated from all other *Steatoda* species by the pattern of black spots on the white dorsal side of the opisthosoma (fig. 1).

Material examined (see also fig. 4)

TUNISIA. G. Gafsa: Gafsa oasis, 34°24'42"N, 8°46'45"E, 284 m a.s.l., 1 male, stones and litter in oasis, 2.III.2005, J. Van Keer leg. (CJVK).

G. Kebili: Douz South, Djebil National Park, 33°27'41"N, 9°01'46"E, 69 m a.s.l., 1 female, under stones, 30.III.2000, R. Bosmans leg. (CRB); same locality, 1 female, under stones, 2.IV.2001, U. Molzdryk leg. (CRB).

Previous records (see also fig. 4)

ALGERIA. Wil. Aïn Sefra: Aïn Sefra (LEVY & AMITAI 1982). Wil. El Bayad: El Abiod (DENIS, 1966, sub *T. argentea*). EGYPT. Without precise locality (THORELL 1875, sub *L. ephippiatus*; SIMON 1908, sub *S. ochraceus*). Sinai: Bir Gifgafa, Ayun Mussa (LEVY & AMITAI 1982). ISRAEL. Ze'elim, Makhtesh Ramon (LEVY & AMITAI 1982). LIBYA. Ajdabiya: Between Ajdabiya and Jalu (CAPORIACCO 1933, sub *T. argentea*). Al Kufrah: Kufrah oasis (Cufra; CAPORIACCO 1933, sub *T. argentea*). Murzuq: El Gatroun (DENIS 1966, sub *T. argentea*). Tripoli: Tripoli (SIMON 1908, sub *S. ochraceus*). TUNISIA. Without precise locality (SIMON 1908, sub *S. ochraceus*).

Description

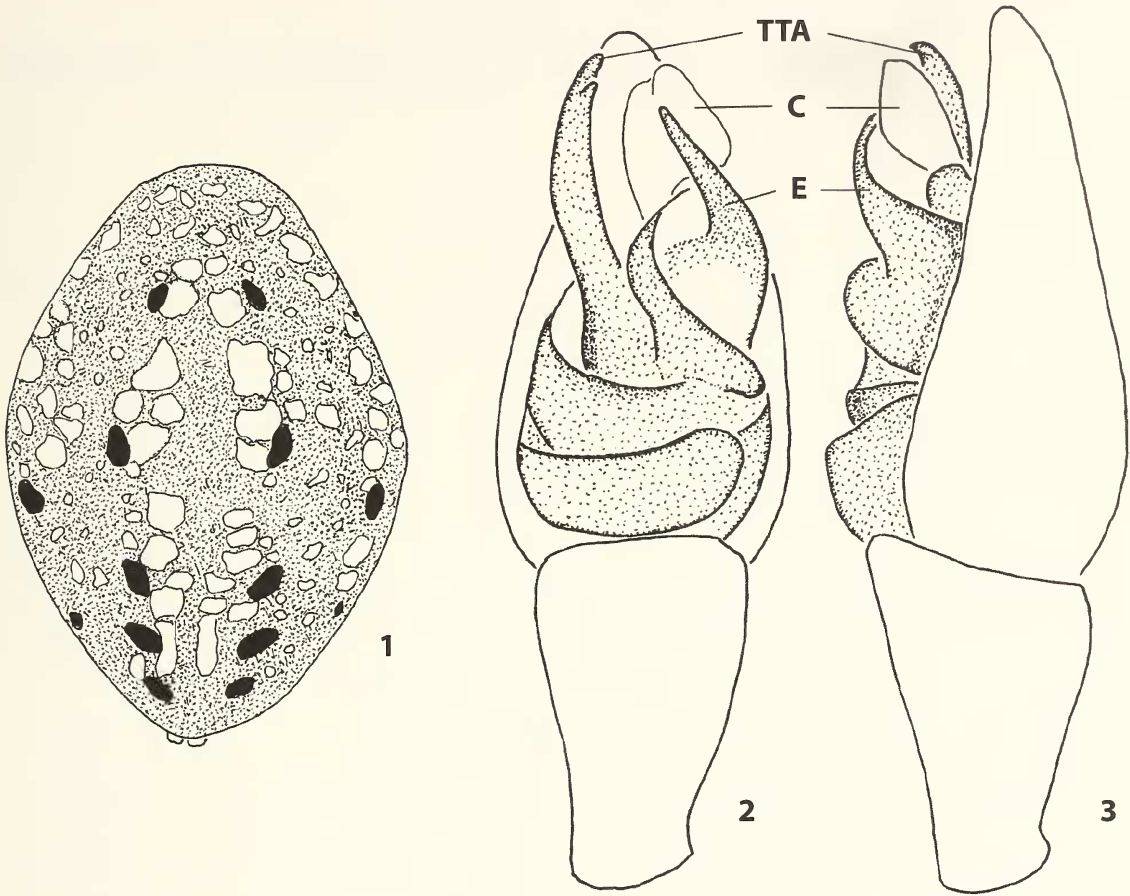
Male:

Measurements: Total length 4.2; carapace 1.9 long, 1.4 wide; Femur I 2.51 long.

Colour: Prosoma and sternum uniformly yellowish brown, especially at sides covered with small, pointed

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Figs. 1-3. *Steatoda ephippiata* 1. Abomen, dorsal view; 2. Male palp, ventral view; 3. Idem, lateral view. C: Conductor; E: Embolus; TTA: Theridiid tegular apophysis

tubercles bearing bristles; central fovea rather deep; legs yellowish brown, without spots or annulations; opisthosoma (fig. 1) dorsally cream white mixed with pale grey, with 5 pairs of black spots in longitudinal rows, laterally greyish brown, ventrally with broad white band covering almost entire region between epigastric furrow and spinnerets. Chelicerae: Not enlarged, armed with one promarginal tooth. Palp (figs. 2-3): Tibia 0.27 long, cymbium 0.45 long; theridiid regular apophysis

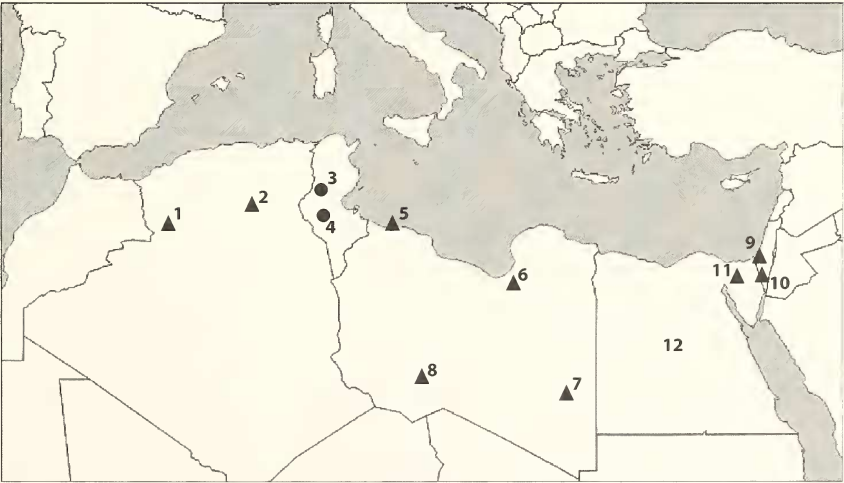


Fig. 4: Map with all known records of *Steatoda ephippiata*. ● = new localities, ▲ = localities from literature. 1. Ain-Sefra (Algeria), 2. El Abiod (Algeria), 3. Gafsa (Tunisia), 4. Douz-Kebili (Tunisia), 5. Tripoli (Libya), 6. Ajdabiya (Libya), 7. Kufra (Libya), 8. El Gatroun (Libya), 9. Ze'elim (Israel), 10. Makatesh Ramon (Israel), 11. Sinai (Egypt), 12. Egypt (no specific locality)

large and straight, bifid distally and almost reaching tip of cymbium; embolus short and straight; conductor membraneous, as wide as long with bluntly rounded tip reaching almost as high as the theridiid tegular apophysis.

Female: See LEVY & AMITAI (1982).

Distribution

The species is known from Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Israel (fig. 4).

Ecology

The few specimens collected were found in arid and semi-arid zones under stones. The single male was captured in March, females in March and April and in Israel also in September (LEVY & AMITAI 1982).

Acknowledgements

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